

Plato sends his best to the friends and companions of Dion

You have written to say that I should consider your intentions to be the same as Dion's, and in fact you have insisted that I stand with you [324a], to the extent that I am able, with both my words and actions. For my part, if indeed you do have the same opinions and motivations as Dion, I will agree to stand with you, but if you do not, I will have to consider the matter at length. Now, concerning Dion's intentions and motivations, I can speak not through conjecture but as one who knows the matter well. For when I first arrived in Syracuse at about the age of forty, Dion was the same age as Hipparinos is now, and he held [324b] then the same opinion that he maintained till the very end, namely that the Syracusans ought to be free and to live in accordance with the best of laws. So it would not be at all surprising if one of the gods were to make Hipparinos hold the same views on politics and feel the same way as Dion.

It is, however, worthwhile for young and old alike to hear how all this began, so I will try to go over it from the beginning for you, since the present circumstances call for it. When I was a young man, I felt the same way that many others surely do: I believed that as soon as I became master of my destiny, I would get involved in the politics of the city. [324c] Unfortunately for me, the city suffered the following fate: a revolution occurred, since the government at the time was much maligned, and fifty-one men emerged as leaders of this revolution: eleven in the city and ten in the Piraeus, with each of these regulating the business of the marketplace and whatever needed managing in the urban areas; and thirty men [324d] who were put in charge and given full authority over everything. Now, some of these men happened to be relations and acquaintances of mine, and, more to the point, they immediately recruited me, as if these matters concerned me. Given my youth, my feelings were not surprising, for I believed that they were going to govern the city by leading it out of a sort of unjust existence into a just one, so I eagerly turned my attention to them and to what they were doing.

As it happened, I soon saw them making the former government look like gold. Among other things, they took [324e] my old friend Socrates, who I would not be ashamed to say was practically the most just of all men at that time, and they sent him off, along with other men, to drag another citizen off to his death [325a] so that Socrates might be an accomplice to their crimes, whether he wanted to or not. He, however, did not obey, choosing instead to run the risk of facing any punishment whatsoever rather than be associated with their unholy enterprises. When I saw all of this, and some other similarly nasty things, I was appalled, and I extracted myself from that awful business.

Not long afterwards, the regime of the Thirty and the entire government collapsed, and before I knew it, the desire to engage [325b] with public and political matters began to lure me in again. To be sure, in that period of chaos many things were happening that one might find appalling, and it is not at all surprising that in these revolutionary times, certain people were exacting excessive vengeance against their enemies. Still, those who had returned to the city acted with great prudence.

As chance would have it though, certain individuals in power brought my friend Socrates to trial, laying on him a charge that was of the utmost sacrilege, [325c] and which he deserved least of all men. Indeed, they charged Socrates with impiety, while others condemned and killed him – the same man who had previously refused to take part in the unholy arrest of a friend of the very men who were unfortunate enough to be in exile at that time.

As I considered these things – both the laws and customs and the men who were engaged in politics – the more that I assessed the situation and advanced into adulthood, the more it seemed to me to be difficult to engage in politics in a reasonable manner. [325d] For one cannot do anything without trusted friends or associates, and it was hard to find such individuals around in those days, since our city was not being governed in accordance with the customs and manners of our forefathers, and it was also impossible to acquire new ones with any ease.

Meanwhile, our customs and written laws were both in the process of being corrupted, and this had progressed to such a remarkable degree that, [325e] even though I had first been moved by a strong impulse to take part in public affairs, as I watched and saw everything always being pulled this way and that, I wound up with my head spinning. Nevertheless, I did not shy away from considering how there might be some improvement in these matters, [326a] and indeed in the entire government, and I remained ever vigilant for an opportune moment to act. Ultimately, however, I came to this conclusion about the cities of our time: they are all governed poorly, for without some sort of incredible intervention and a certain amount of luck, their laws are basically unsalvageable. And I was forced to say, in praise of the true love of wisdom, that it is through this that it is possible to understand all things just, both in politics and in the private sphere. As a result, humanity will not desist [326b] from evil until either those who truly and properly pursue philosophy come into power, or those who hold power in our cities, by some sort of divine fate, actually pursue philosophy.

I still maintained this line of thought when I first arrived in Italy and Sicily. And upon my arrival I was not at all pleased with what the Italians and Sicilians call the blessed life, one laden with feasts, spent stuffing oneself twice a day, never going to bed alone at night, [326c] and all the other things that go hand-in-hand with this lifestyle. With such habits, nobody under the sun who had followed this path since childhood could ever develop any sense – no one is tempered by so admirable a nature – nor would anyone ever be likely to become moderate. Of course, the same reasoning would apply to every other kind of virtue, and no city would find peace under laws of any kind, as long as men thought it necessary to squander everything to the extreme, and believed that they should [326d] be lazy about everything except feasting, drinking, and the avid pursuit of sexual pleasure. On the contrary, it is inevitable that such cities constantly rotate between tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy, and that those ruling such cities are unable to bear the very mention of a just government based on equality under the law.

With these things in mind, along with those referred to earlier, I crossed over to Syracuse, [326e] perhaps by chance, but more likely by some superior power's contrivance to lay the foundation for the things that have now befallen Dion and Syracuse. And I fear that still more will arise, if you do not now defer to me as I advise you for the second time.

Why, therefore, do I say [327a] that my arrival in Sicily was the beginning of all these things? As I spent time with Dion, then a young man, and revealed in conversation what I thought to be best for people, advising him to act accordingly, I dared to ignore the possibility that I could be in some way engineering, unwittingly, the eventual dissolution of the tyranny. For in fact Dion was an astute student of all things, including the arguments that I presented at the time, and he listened with such extraordinary [327b] acumen, like no other young man I've ever met, and he desired to live the remainder of his life differently from the majority of Italians and Sicilians, loving virtue more than pleasure or any other extravagance. As a result, he began to pass his time in a way that was obnoxious to those who were living according to the customs of the tyranny up until the death of Dionysius.

Afterwards, Dion began to think that he was not the only one to think this way, which [327c] he had acquired through proper reasoning, and he thought he saw it in a few others – not many, but some – and he believed that with the gods' assistance, Dionysius could soon become one of those people, and that if Dionysius did become such a man then life for both him and the rest of the Syracusans would in turn become extra-ordinarily blessed. On top of this, he thought that I should come to Syracuse as quickly as possible [327d] to be his partner in this venture, recalling the time he and I had spent together and how easily he had learned to desire the best and most beautiful of lives. Moreover, if he could now also bring this about in Dionysius, as he was endeavoring, he held the lofty hope of creating a happy and genuine existence throughout the entire land, one without slaughters and murders and all the current atrocities.

It was with such virtuous intentions that Dion convinced Dionysius to send for me, and Dion himself summoned me and implored me to come as quickly as possible [327e] and by whatever means, before Dionysius should fall in with anyone else who might steer him towards a lifestyle other than the best one. He implored me with the following words, though they are rather long to repeat: "what more opportune moment," he said, "are we waiting for than the one that is now at hand by some divine providence?" He described the realm of Italy and Sicily [328a] and his own power within it, mentioning the youth of Dionysius and his great eagerness for education and philosophy. And he spoke of his own nephews and relatives, how they would be easily influenced by the reasoning and lifestyle that I advocated, and in turn most capable of motivating Dionysius, so that now, if ever, all our hopes of the same people being both philosophers and leaders of great cities [328b] would come into fruition.

These were the exhortations he made, along with many others of this sort. As for my own opinion, I feared for the young people involved and what would become of them, for their desires are fleeting and often contradictory, though regarding Dion's character, I knew that his spirit was by nature serious and had already matured in due measure. Therefore, as I pondered the situation and vacillated about whether or not to listen to him and make the crossing, I was ultimately inclined to think that if ever one were to try to accomplish the things I had in mind [328c] about laws and government, it had to be attempted now. For if I could adequately convince a single person, I would accomplish something of absolute good.

It was with such intentions and convictions, then, that I left home, not with those that some have surmised. On the contrary, I felt within myself great trepidation at the thought that I might find myself to be nothing more than a voice, pure and simple, incapable of taking on any concrete action, and that I would risk betraying first of all [328d] the hospitality and friendship of Dion, who was, in reality, in no small amount of danger.

In any case, if he were to come to me – either because something bad had happened to him or because he had been exiled by Dionysius and his other enemies – and if he were to inquire of me in the following words: “Plato, I come to you as an exile, not to beg for hoplites or horsemen with which to protect myself against my enemies, but in need of the words and persuasiveness with which I know that you, above all, bring young people around to what is good and just, and are most capable of creating feelings of friendship and comradeship [328e] among them. It is for want of these things, something for which you share some blame, that I have left Syracuse and am now here. You bear less blame for my own situation, but is it not your responsibility to see to it that philosophy – which you always praise and say is treated disgracefully by other men – not be betrayed along with me? [329a] If I were living in Megara, you would have doubtless come to help me in the matters to which I summoned you, or else considered yourself the worst of all men. As it is, however, do you really think you can avoid the reputation of a scoundrel by complaining of the length of the journey and of the magnitude of the travel and work involved? You will need a much better excuse than that.”

What decent response could I give to such words? There is none. So I came, following both reason and justice [329b] (as much as a person can), and on these grounds I set aside my own studies, which were not insignificant, and I came to live under a tyranny that was suitable neither for myself nor for my words. And in coming, I freed myself of my obligation to Zeus *Xenios*, and I gave no grounds for reproach to the order of philosophy, which would have shouldered the blame if, worn down and cowed, I had engaged in such disgraceful behavior.

To make a long story short, when I arrived I found that everything around Dionysius was in a state of discord, and that numerous false accusations [329c] against Dion had been brought before the tyrant. I defended him as much I could, little as that was, but about three months later Dionysius accused Dion of plotting against the tyranny, and after putting him on board a small boat, he banished him in a most dishonorable fashion.

Of course, after this those of us who were friends with Dion were all afraid that we would be accused of and punished for being in league with Dion's conspiracy. In my particular case, word got around Syracuse that I had been executed by Dionysius as the one responsible for [329d] everything that had happened. But Dionysius perceived how we all felt, and, afraid that something larger might arise from our fears, he received us all most warmly. What is more, he expressly reassured me and encouraged me to keep my spirits high, and he implored me to remain by all means. Indeed, my fleeing from him would have been not at all good for him, whereas my remaining... Well, it was for this reason that Dionysius pretended to need it so desperately.

As we know, however, the requests of tyrants are compounded by [329e] coercion. And to engineer my permanence he simply prevented my departure: he brought me to the acropolis and put me up in a place from which not a single captain would have taken me away – not without Dionysius himself sending someone with instructions to give me passage, let alone if he expressly forbade it. And there was no merchant, no official in the country's ports of exit, not a single person who saw me leaving on my own who would not have arrested me immediately and taken me back to Dionysius. Especially because by now it had been broadcast, in contrast to [330a] earlier reports, that Dionysius was marvelously pleased with Plato!

But how did things really stand? Truth be told, as time went by, in sharing my habits and my way of life he became more and more pleased. But he constantly wanted me to praise him more and to consider him more of a friend than Dion, and he was absolutely determined to win that battle. At the same time, he shied away from the best means by which that could be achieved, if indeed it ever could be, [330b] which is to say by learning and listening to my discourses on philosophy, spending time and being friendly with me; he feared the gossip of scandal-mongers, worried that he might somehow get tripped up and that Dion would achieve all his ends. I myself abided and maintained the same intentions with which I first arrived, in the hopes that he might come around to a yearning for the philosophical life. But his resistance won out.

And so it turned out that I spent the period of my first stay in Sicily [330c] engaged in all these things. After this I departed and then came back again after Dionysius summoned me most urgently. For those of you who ask what I wished to accomplish in coming a second time, I will address later the things that I did and on what account, and why they were reasonable and justified. But only after I have first advised you as to what must be done in the present circumstances, otherwise my second order of business may end up the focus.

This, then, is what I have to say: shouldn't someone advising a man who is struggling and leading a degenerate [330d] sort of life suggest first of all that he change his lifestyle, and only make other recommendations if this man is willing to listen? And if he is not willing to do so, well, I would consider someone who gets out of advising such a person to be courageous and skilled in the art of medicine, and someone who stays on to be unskilled and cowardly.

The same thing holds true with regard to a city, whether one person or many be in charge of it: if, on the one hand, the government is being guided down a straight path, and an adviser is sought concerning [330e] some suitable course of action, it is proper for a sensible person to give advice in this situation. Conversely, when those seeking advice tread well outside the boundaries of proper governance and in no way wish to fall back into line; if they tell their adviser to first of all let the government be and not to [331a] disturb it in any way, on penalty of death; and if they insist that he give advice as to how that which caters to their passions and desires might most quickly and easily become permanent; well, I would consider someone who stayed on for such consultations to be a coward, and someone who refused to do so to be courageous.

Indeed, this is the attitude that I maintain whenever anyone consults me about something important in his life, such as about the acquisition of wealth, [331b] or about caring for his body or soul. If this person seems to be living his daily life in a reasonable manner, or to be willing to listen to the things shared by the person who is consulted, then I advise eagerly and do not give up after I have made only a token effort.

But if a person does not consult me at all, or if it is clear that he will not listen to his adviser, I will neither give unsolicited advice to such a person nor coerce him, not even if he were my own son. Now, I would advise a slave and would use force if he were unwilling, [331c] but I do not think it is permissible to use force with a father or a mother, unless they are sick and in a state of delirium. On the other hand, if they are living a settled sort of life that is satisfying to them, though not to me, it is not up to me to alienate them in vain by rebuking them, nor to minister to them with flattery, nor to provide them with the satisfaction of desires in the clutches of which I myself would not want to live.

Surely, a sensible person must lead his life keeping the same thing in mind when it comes to his own city: he should speak up if [331d] he thinks his city is governed poorly, as long as he would neither speak in vain nor die for his words. But whenever it is impossible for a city to become excellent without banishments and massacres, he should not employ violence against his fatherland for the sake of a political revolution; instead, he should keep his peace and pray for the best things both for himself and for the city.

It is according to this principle that I would advise you, and that I advised Dionysius along with Dion: first of all to live his daily life so as to become, as much as possible, [331e] master of himself, and also to acquire dependable friends and companions, so as to avoid suffering the things that his father did. For his father, after taking many of the great cities of Sicily that had previously been sacked by barbarians, was not able to settle and establish in each one administrations of reliable associates, neither of strangers [332a] of any origin nor indeed of brothers whom he himself had raised from a young age and had variously turned from private citizens into leaders, from poor men into exceptionally rich ones.

Not by persuasion, instruction, benefaction, or kinship was he able to make any of these men a partner to his rule. Rather, he was seven times worse off than Darius who, not trusting his kin, not even the ones he himself had raised, but only those who had been partners in his conquest of the Mede [332b] and the Eunuch, distributed among these seven lots, each one bigger than all of Sicily, and provided himself with reliable partners who made attempts neither against him nor each other. He thus created the model of how a good king and lawmaker should act, for he established laws that even now help preserve the Persian empire.

Beyond that example, the Athenians have also taken numerous Greek cities that they did not settle themselves, but which had been invaded by barbarians, and they have nevertheless [332c] maintained this empire for eighty years and acquired in each of these cities men that are well-disposed to them. Dionysius,⁴ on the other hand, lumped all of Sicily into a single polity, and as a result of his prudence he trusted no one, and barely survived. For he was poor in men who were friendly or loyal, and there is no greater sign of virtue or depravity than whether or not one is bereft of such men.

⁴ Referring here to Dionysius I, father of Dionysius II and brother-in-law of Dion.

This, then, is what Dion and I advised Dionysius, seeing as his father's affairs [332d] had left him without either an education or suitable social connections: first, that he try to acquire for himself other friends who were in tune with virtue, both from among his relatives and from others his age; and above all that he be such a person himself, for in this he was remarkably lacking. Now, we were not entirely frank in our discussions – indeed it would not have been safe. Instead, we intimated and conveyed through argumentation that this is the way that every man saves both himself and whomever he leads, [332e] while by not taking this course one accomplishes the complete opposite.

Moreover, if he pursued the path that we suggested and made himself both wise and prudent, and if he settled the abandoned cities of Sicily and bound them together under laws and constitutions, so that they would be united both with him and each other against the forces of the barbarians, he would not only [333a] double his father's kingdom but in fact multiply it. For if all this happened, he would be ready to make the Carthaginians subject to the same yoke they had been under in the time of Gelon, unlike now, conversely, where his father had agreed to pay tribute to the barbarians.

These were the things that we expressed and urged, though the rumors seeping in from all sides had it that we were plotting against Dionysius. And in the end, by prevailing upon Dionysius, these rumors served to banish Dion and [333b] to set off terror among us. To make a long story short, Dion left the Peloponnese and Athens and forcefully rebuked Dionysius. But when he had twice freed and returned the city to them, the Syracusans still felt the same way about Dion as Dionysius who, when Dion was trying to instruct and encourage him to be a king worthy of his reign and to thus be a partner in his life's work, had listened to those [333c] who were disparaging Dion and saying that everything he was doing in that time he was doing so that Dionysius would be so entranced by education that he would lose interest in ruling and turn things over to Dion, letting him then usurp the throne and banish Dionysius from the kingdom by treachery. These accusations won over the Syracusans a second time, and for those responsible it was a disgusting and shameful victory.

As for what transpired next, those of you [333d] who are summoning me to give advice concerning your present circumstances must hear about it. I came to the tyrant as an Athenian citizen, as an associate of Dion and an ally to him, and with the intention of forming a friendship rather than making war. But in my fight against the slanderers I was defeated. Dionysius, moreover, utterly failed in his attempt to persuade me, with money and honors, to remain with him as both a friend and a witness to the dignity of Dion's exile.

Later, while returning home from Athens, [333e] Dion was accompanied by two brothers who had become his friends not through the pursuit of philosophy, but from the sort of relationship that many friends have and that one develops through entertaining and by becoming initiands into and then witnesses to the Mysteries together. It was above all from these experiences that these two men became Dion's friends and accompanied and assisted him on his journey home. But when they [334a] arrived in Sicily, and when they understood that Dion was being falsely accused by the Sicilians – whom he had freed – of plotting to become tyrant, they not only betrayed their host and companion, they actually became the very agents of his murder, standing by with weapons in hand as accomplices to his murderers.

Now, I neither pass over nor speak at length about the shameful and unholy nature of all this – it is and will be up to others to spin [334b] those tales in the future. But I will address what is said about the two Athenians, namely that they brought shame to their city. For I dare say that it was also an Athenian who did *not* betray that same man, even though he could have gotten money and many other honors. For it was not because of some vulgar affection that he became his friend, but through the communion shared in the course of the education of a free person, the only thing a sensible person should trust more than kinship of soul and body. So I do not believe that [334c] the two killers of Dion should be a cause for reproach for the city, as if they were men who had ever been held in any regard.

All this I have said for the purpose of advising Dion's friends and relatives. But I will provide you with some advice in addition to this, and say for the third time something I've already told two others: neither Sicily nor any other polity should be enslaved to human masters, but rather to laws. This at any rate is my idea. For it is better neither for the enslavers nor for the enslaved themselves, [334d] their children, or their children's children. On the contrary, the attempt itself is totally destructive, and the dispositions of souls that are wont to snatch at such gains are small-minded and servile, and know nothing of the benefits conferred in the present and future by both divine and human justice and goodness.

I tried first to persuade Dion of these things, later Dionysius, and now, third of all, you. And for the sake of Zeus *Sōtēr* of the third libation,⁶ listen to me, and look at Dionysius and Dion: the former did not listen to me and now lives [334e] poorly, while the latter did listen and died nobly. Indeed, it is altogether right and good for one who aspires to the best of things, both for himself and his city, to endure whatever he may endure, since none of us is immortal, nor, contrary to what many believe, would we be happy if we turned out to be. For the soul-less have nothing of either bad or good [335a] that is worth mentioning, while these things will be visited upon the soul whether it is with or separated from its body.

⁶ On the order of libation offerings at banquets, the third of which would be dedicated to Zeus *Sōtēr* ("Zeus the Saviour"), see esp. D. Tolles, *The Banquet-Libations of the Greeks* (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, 1943), 55-68.

We must truly trust in the ancient and sacred precepts that reveal to us that a soul is immortal, that it contains within it judges, and that it pays the harshest penalties whenever it is set free from its body. Therefore, we must also believe that it is a lesser evil to suffer the greatest wrongs and injustices than it is to commit them, a notion that the man who is money-loving [335b] but soul-poor either does not hear, or if he does hear it he mocks it – so he thinks – all the while snatching from every corner, like a wild animal, whatever he intends to eat or drink, or whatever slavish and graceless pleasure, falsely called an object of love, he wishes to provide himself and gorge upon. He is blind and does not see the company that such wickedness keeps, an abomination ever equal to each act of injustice which the wrongdoer must drag along with himself as he wanders upon the earth and when he goes back below the earth [335c] on a journey that is sordid and miserable at every turn.

Now, I persuaded Dion when I explained these and other such things to him, and so I am justifiably angry with those who killed him, and likewise with Dionysius. For they all caused the gravest harm to me and to practically all of humanity: the murderers by destroying a person who wished to advance justice, Dionysius by having no desire whatsoever to advance justice [335d] throughout his entire kingdom. And this despite the fact that he had the utmost power in a place where, if philosophy and power had truly been united within the same individual, it would have shone forth through all peoples, Greeks and Barbarians alike, and demonstrated to everyone the truth of the idea that no city or man can ever be happy except by leading a life based on wisdom and subordinate to justice, regardless of whether this capacity is acquired independently or through a proper upbringing and education that conforms to the morals of men who are conscientious [335e] rulers.

This is the damage that Dionysius has done, and compared to this, the rest would be but a small injury for me. The man who killed Dion did just as much harm as Dionysius, though he does not know it. For I know well, to the extent that one person can vouch for another, that if Dion had come into power, he would never have molded the city in any form [336a] other than this: first of all, after he had brought joy to Syracuse, his own fatherland, by delivering it from slavery and fashioning it in the form of freedom, he would have used any means necessary to equip it with laws that were the best and most beneficial to the citizens; and after this he would have set his sights on settling all of Sicily and rendering it free from the barbarians, pushing some of them out, subduing others more easily than Hieron did. Furthermore, if all these things had been done by a man [336b] who was just, courageous, prudent, and a philosopher, virtue would have acquired the same reputation among most people as it would have among practically everyone, if Dionysius had been persuaded, and all would have been saved.

In the end, however, some deity or, perhaps, some avenging spirit barged in bringing lawlessness, godlessness, and above all the insolence of ignorance out of which all evil sets roots and blossoms and finally produces the most bitter of fruits for those who have sown them, and this upended and ruined everything for the [336c] second time.

But now, so as not to jinx it,⁷ let us speak this third time in auspicious terms. I still advise you to emulate Dion and his goodwill towards his fatherland and his prudent manner of living, and to try and fulfill under better auspices those plans of his that you have now heard clearly from me.

⁷ Special thanks to Tony Leyh for providing this excellent suggestion for the translation of οἰωνοῦ, and for making me aware of the ornithological aspects shared by both the English and Greek terms.

And when it comes to those who are unable to live according to [336d] your ancestral ways in the Dorian fashion, those who aspire to the way of life of the Sicilians, such as Dion's murderers, I urge you neither to send for people such as these nor to think that they could ever do anything reasonable or dependable. Instead, to assist in the settlement of all of Sicily and the establishment of equality under the law, you should send for other men from both Sicily itself and from the entire Peloponnese; nor should you shy away from summoning men from Athens, for there too one may find individuals who surpass all others in virtue and despise the insolence of men who murder their friends.

If, however, these things should only occur later, and if you feel upon you the strain of the [336e] many and constant disagreements of ever-flourishing factions, then every man upon whom some divine fortune has bestowed a small measure of proper thinking must in some way understand that those who engage in civil wars will never see an end to their problems until the people in power stop perpetuating malice with fighting, banishments, and slaughter, [337a] and refrain from punishing their enemies. When they exercise restraint, and when they have passed laws that are impartial and established no more for their own satisfaction than for the defeated parties, then they will force others to regard the laws with these two crucial attitudes: respect and fear. Fear of men who show themselves to be superior when it comes to force; respect because those same men appear to be stronger than their own pleasures and because they are willing and able to subjugate themselves to the laws. Otherwise, there is no city that will ever put an end to its troubles [337b] when it is at war with itself. On the contrary, discord, hostility, loathing, and mistrust tend to always exist in cities that are set up along lines of internal antagonisms.

To be sure, whenever they aspire towards preservation, those in power must select from among themselves whichever men of Greek origin they discover are the best. First of all they should find men who are old, and who have wives and children at home and whose ancestors are as numerous and renowned as possible, and they should all be men of [337c] adequate means – fifty such men should be sufficient for a city of ten-thousand people. They should summon these men from their homes with pleas and as many honors as possible, and after they have been summoned and oaths have been sworn, they should urge and implore them to set laws, and to cater no more to either the victors or the vanquished, but rather in an equal and impartial manner to the entire city.

Once the laws have been established, everything will depend on the following: if the victors yield to the laws [337d] more than the vanquished do, then a refuge from all evil and a full share of salvation and happiness will be provided. If they do not, however, you should not call on either myself or anyone else to deal with those who do not follow the instructions I have now given. For this is closely related to what Dion and I both, out of care for Syracuse, attempted to do, and it is the second-best course of action. The best is what we tried to do at first with Dionysius himself, namely to confer a set of benefits for everyone alike. But fortune, a force far stronger than humans, crushed that attempt. [337e] And now you all must try to achieve this with greater success, aided by good luck and some divine fortune.

This advice and message, along with the earlier one about my first arrival at Dionysius's court, should suffice. But after this, anyone who is so inclined can hear about my later journey across the sea, and how fitting and reasonable it was. As I said, I have told the whole story of the first part [338a] of my sojourn in Sicily, the period before I advised Dion's friends and companions. After that I attempted to persuade Dionysius, by whatever means possible, to let me go. Since there was a war in Sicily at the time, we both agreed that Dionysius would call me and Dion back when there was peace and when he had made things more secure for himself in his kingdom, and he asked Dion [338b] to conceive of his situation not so much as an exile, but rather as a relocation. I agreed that I would come under these terms, and when peace had come, Dionysius summoned me, but he asked Dion to wait for another year, even though he insisted that I come anyway. Dion, for his part, urged and implored me to set sail, for reports kept arriving from Sicily that Dionysius had once again become tremendously infatuated with philosophy. Dion therefore eagerly begged me not to reject Dionysius's summons.

For my part, I knew that [338c] philosophy has often had such an effect on young men, but all the same I thought it safer by far to forget about both Dion and Dionysius, and I irritated both of them when I responded that I was old and that the current situation did not meet the standards of the agreement at all.

It appears that after this, Archytas arrived at Dionysius's court – before sailing away I had managed to forge a bond of friendship and hospitality between Archytas and the people of [338d] Tarentum and Dionysius – and that there were some others in Syracuse who had studied some under Dion, and still others who had studied under these and who were thus quite full of misconceptions about philosophy; I believe that they were trying to have discussions with Dionysius on such topics, as if Dionysius had thoroughly absorbed all my thinking.

Now, Dionysius is by no means bereft of a natural faculty for learning, and he is tremendously ambitious. As such, he was perhaps pleased by these discussions, and also ashamed when it became obvious [338e] that he had not studied at all during my visit. As a result, he came around to a desire to study more attentively, while at the same time his ambition pushed him to do so as well. (I have already explained, in my account above, why he had not paid attention during my earlier visit.) So when I had reached the safety of my home and rejected his second invitation – which I also explained above – it seems Dionysius became obsessed with making sure that no one believe that, once I had gotten to know his lifestyle, [339a] I regarded his natural abilities and his habits with disdain, and that in my disgust I was no longer willing to come to him.

It is only fair that I tell the truth and to be patient if anyone who has just heard these accounts should look down on my philosophy and believe instead that it was the tyrant who was sensible. In any case, this third time Dionysius sent for me with a trireme, so as to make the voyage easy, and he also sent Archedemus, one of Archytas's pupils, whom he thought I regarded most highly of everyone in [339b] Sicily, along with some other acquaintances of mine from there. All these men brought to me the same report, namely that Dionysius had progressed quite impressively with regards to philosophy.

He also sent a very long letter, knowing how I felt about Dion and about Dion's own desire for me to make the voyage and come to Syracuse. To be sure, his letter was prepared with an eye to all these things, having as it did a preface that went something like this: "Dionysius [339c] to Plato" – after which he said all the customary things but nothing else before – "if you should now be persuaded to come to me in Sicily, first and foremost Dion's situation will be arranged in whatever manner you wish, for I know that your wishes will be reasonable, and that I will agree to them. Otherwise, however, none of Dion's affairs will work out in the way that you want, neither as regards the person himself nor anything else you might have in mind." So he said, and the rest [339d] is too long and pointless to repeat.

Other letters also poured in, both from Archytas and others in Tarentum, extolling Dionysius's love of wisdom and saying that, if I didn't come now, I would scuttle their friendship with Dionysius, which I had arranged and which was no trivial thing when it came to political matters. Such were the summons that I received at that time, and with the Sicilians and Italians drawing me in, and with the Athenians basically driving me out with their harassment, [339e] so to speak, the same consideration kept coming back to me: that I shouldn't betray Dion or my friends and companions in Tarentum. It also occurred to me that it did not defy belief that a sharp young man might hear snatches of discussions of lofty subjects and become enamored of the best sort of life, and that it was thus necessary to definitively investigate how these things stood, and to neither betray this ideal nor to be responsible for something truly disgraceful, [340a] if in fact things really were as they said.

After casting this veil of reasoning over myself I set out, although I was quite fearful and had a sensation that was not altogether good, as was appropriate. In any case, in coming I truly experienced this "third one for the savior," for I was fortunate to get back safely, and for this I must, after god, acknowledge a debt of gratitude to Dionysius, for although there were many who wished to destroy me, he prevented this from happening and granted some measure of respect to our dealings.

[340b] When I arrived, I thought I should first of all conduct an evaluation as to whether or not philosophy had truly lit a fire under Dionysius, or whether that great trail of reports that had come to Athens was false. Now, there is a certain way of trying to conduct such an evaluation that is not sordid, but in fact quite suitable for tyrants, particularly for ones that are full of misconceptions, which, when I arrived, I immediately perceived was the case with Dionysius.

Basically, it is necessary to show such individuals what the entire matter consists of [340c] and how substantial it is, how much work it involves, and how many things it entails. For if the person is truly a lover of philosophy and is suited to and worthy of the endeavor and is inspired by the gods, then upon hearing all this he will believe the path spoken of is a marvelous one, that he must direct all his energy towards it, and that to do otherwise would not be a worthwhile existence. And in fact, after this he applies all of his own energy and that of his guide, and he does not let up until he either fulfills his purpose, or until he acquires enough power that he is able to find his way without his guide.

[340d] Such a person lives in this way and according to these principles in whatever business he happens to be engaged, always clinging first and foremost to philosophy and to a daily regimen that makes him sharpest, most mindful, and most able to reason with himself in a sober manner, and he consistently despises the opposite way of life. On the other hand, those who are not true lovers of philosophy, but who are merely colored by certain notions like those who have been burned by the sun – when they see how much there is to learn, what sort of work [340e] there is to do, and that the daily lifestyle that suits the endeavor is a moderate one, they consider the task difficult, even [341a] impossible for themselves. And in the end, they are not able to pursue it, and some of them convince themselves that they have learned enough about the whole thing and need know nothing more about certain matters. The experiment itself thus becomes a clear and most reliable evaluation of people who are pampered and unable to work hard, since they can never cast blame upon their guide, rather than upon themselves personally, when they are not able to fully apply themselves to the matter.

This is what I said then to Dionysius. Granted, I did not go over everything thoroughly, nor did [341b] Dionysius inquire. For he purported to know many of the most important things himself and to be fully competent based on what he had overheard from others. Later I heard that he had written about what he learned then, framing them as if they were a product of his own creation and not at all of things he had heard. But I know nothing of this. I do know that some others have written about these same questions, though even they do not know who they are. At any rate, this is what I can say about all those who have written and [341c] will write on the subject, and all those who claim to know about what I work on, whether they have heard about it from me, or from others, or whether they have figured it out on their own: it is not possible, in my opinion at least, for these men to have any knowledge of the matter. There is certainly no treatise of mine on it, nor will there ever be. For unlike other sciences, this one can in no way be communicated by means of words. On the contrary, it is only through a prolonged communion with the subject, by living with it, that, like a light that is kindled [341d] by a flickering flame, it begins to suddenly nourish itself within one's soul.

And I know this much as well: if it is to be written or related at all, it would be best related by me, and if it was written poorly, it would cause me no small amount of pain. Moreover, if it seemed to me that these things could be adequately written and expressed to the masses, what finer thing could I do in life than to set down in writing something that would be a great boon for humanity and to illuminate [341e] for everyone the nature of things? But I do not believe that the attempt to do so would be good for people, except for a certain few who are able to work it out for themselves with just a little bit of guidance. As for the rest, such writings would fill some with an improper and altogether unsuitable disdain, and others with the high but empty hope that [342a] they had learned something truly important.

Nevertheless, I have it in mind to say a little more about this, for in speaking, what I am talking about will soon become clearer. There is a certain argument that is true and that stands in opposition to the man who writes anything at all about such things, something I have often spoken of before and which, it appears, I must now repeat: everything that exists has three elements through which one must approach the knowledge of that thing; the fourth element is knowledge itself, and the fifth, [342b] one must posit, is that which is in fact knowable and true. The first of these is “name,” the second is “definition,” the third is “image,” and the fourth is knowledge.

If you wish to understand what I am saying, take a single example and reflect on everything else in the same way. There is something called a circle, the name of which is the same thing I have just pronounced. Its definition is the second thing, and it is composed of nouns and verbs: “that which is completely equal from every extremity to the middle” would be the definition of that thing that is called “round,” “spherical,” [342c] and “circle.” The third element (the image) may be painted and expunged, lathed and destroyed, but the circle itself, which all these things represent, undergoes none of these changes, since it is something other than these things.

The fourth element is knowledge and understanding and a true conception of these things. And since we must establish that these are all a single thing – something that resides not in sounds or shapes of bodies but within souls – it is clear that it differs both from the nature of the circle itself and from [342d] the three elements mentioned above. And of these, understanding comes closest to the fifth in likeness and affinity, while all the others remain quite far off.

To be sure, the same thing holds true for a straight line and a rounded shape and a color, and for the good and beautiful and just, and for an entire body whether it be artificially or naturally formed – fire and water and all such things – and for every living thing, and the dispositions within souls towards everything one creates or endures. For unless [342e] one can somehow grasp the first four of these, one will never fully partake in the knowledge of the fifth. In addition, because of the deficiency of language, these elements [343a] attempt to signify as much the quality of each thing as its essence. As a result, no one with any sense will ever dare to capture this understanding in words, especially in an inalterable form, which is what written characters endure.

Once again, we must go back so you understand what I am saying. Each circle that is in actuality drawn or even lathed is full of that which is opposed to the fifth, since it possesses straightness at every angle. But the circle itself, as I say, has no part either small or large of its opposite nature within itself. And the names of these things, I assert, have nothing that is [343b] constant unto themselves, and there is nothing to prevent that which is now called “round” from being called “straight” and the “straight” “round,” and those things that are changed and called by their opposites will be no less constant.

The same reasoning certainly applies to the “definition,” for if it is composed of nouns and verbs, then nothing constant can ever be sufficiently constant. An infinite discussion may be held about the uncertainty of each of the four things, but the most important thing, the one we mentioned a short time ago, is that although there exists an essence and a quality, when the soul is seeking to know something [343c] it searches for its essence, not its quality. And each of the four elements offers the soul, by means of discourse and according to facts, that which is not sought; everything presents itself in a form that is easy to show and to express and to refute with one’s senses, and it fills just about every man with a sense of confusion and uncertainty.

Given this state of affairs, and thanks to our miserable upbringing, we are unaccustomed to seeking the truth, and at the same time we are satisfied by the images placed before us, nor do we make each other seem ridiculous by asking [343d] and answering questions, even though we are capable of seeing through and refuting the four things. And if we force someone to distinguish and explain the fifth, whoever is willing and able to upend the argument wins, and he makes the one who is offering a full interpretation through speech, writing, or actual answers appear, to most of his audience, to know nothing of the things about which he is trying to write or speak, since the audience is sometimes unaware that it is not the soul of the writer or speaker that is being refuted, but rather the nature of each of the four things, which is inherently [343e] flawed. Nevertheless, the thorough examination of all these problems, going up and down and over each one with great effort, imparts knowledge of a good thing unto a person of a good nature. If one's nature is bad, however, as is the condition of most souls with respect both to learning and to what are called 'morals,' [344a] all these things wither and die, and not even Lynceus would be able to make such men see.

In a word, neither memory nor a sharp mind can make anything of a person who has no affinity for the matter, for a seed cannot germinate in hostile terrain. Hence all those who have no natural connection or affinity with the ways of justice and all other beautiful things, and other individuals who are at once well-versed in and cognizant of other issues, nor indeed those who do share an affinity but whose minds and memories are not sharp – none of these will ever learn the truth of virtue [344b] or of depravity to the full extent possible. For it is necessary to study these things together, along with what is true and untrue of all existence, dedicating to these questions ample time and all one's energy, as I said at the beginning.

And when all of these things – names, definitions, appearances, and perceptions – have been painstakingly elaborated in relation to each other and examined through thoughtful argumentation by people who ask questions and provide answers without malice, only then is it that the light of knowledge and understanding of each element shines forth unto a person who has applied himself [344c] as much as humanly possible. As a result, any man who is serious about truly serious subjects must absolutely avoid writing about them and making them sources of envy and embarrassment for humanity.

To summarize briefly, then, whenever we look at a written composition, whether it be the laws of a lawmaker or anything else whatsoever, we must recognize that the author's most serious ideas do not reside within this text, even if the author himself is serious, but that those ideas remain lodged in the most beautiful part of his soul. And if his most seriously elaborated ideas have in fact been set down [344d] in writing, then "it is most certainly" not the gods but mortal men "who have destroyed his mind."

Whoever has followed me on this meandering narrative will understand that, following this logic, whether it was Dionysius himself who wrote something about the first and loftiest aspects of nature, or whether it was a lesser or greater man, this person has neither learned nor understood properly anything that he has written. For he would have respected these ideas just as I do, and he would not have dared to banish them to a state of disharmony and disrepute. Nor did he write them down in order to remember them better, for no one [344e] can forget something so powerful once he has grasped it with his entire soul, since it is set down in the most compact of formulations. On the contrary, this person wrote out of shameful ambition, whether he attributed the work to himself or to his affiliation with a school, and by delighting in the reputation that came with this affiliation, he proved himself [345a] to be unworthy of it.

Certainly, if Dionysius had acquired this through a single interaction, such as it may be, then how he acquired it “only Zeus knows,” as a Theban would say. As I said, only once did I go over these things with him, and never again after that. Moreover, whoever cares to discover the origins and development of these issues must understand what came afterwards, and why I did not go over these things a second or third time with him, or even more. I do not know whether Dionysius believes that after hearing [345b] everything a single time he understood it all sufficiently, or whether he figured it out for himself or learned it beforehand from others, or whether perhaps he believes that the things I said were worthless, or conversely that they are not meant for him, that they were beyond him and that he would never really be able to lead a life directed at wisdom and virtue.

Now, if he thinks they are worthless, then he is lining up against a great number of individuals who attest the opposite, people who would be far better judges of such things than Dionysius. Conversely, if he says that he discovered or learned these things beforehand (and by extension that they are a worthwhile part of the education of a free soul), [345c] how then, unless he is a truly astonishing person, could he have so callously mistreated the leading authority on these questions?

As for how he mistreated me, I will now explain. Not much time had passed before Dionysius, who had previously allowed Dion to hold onto his possessions and use the income from his estates, forbade his trustees from sending anything to the Peloponnese. It was as if he had completely forgotten about his earlier letter, for he claimed that those things belonged not to Dion but to his son, Dionysius’s nephew, [345d] who according to statute was his ward. This is how far things had progressed at this point in time, and given this state of affairs, I was able to see quite clearly the ‘desire’ that Dionysius had for philosophy. Whether I wanted to be or not, I was justifiably vexed, for it was already summer at that point and ships were leaving port.

Still, it seemed to me that I should be no angrier with Dionysius than with myself and with those who had coerced me into coming [345e] for the third time to the strait of Scylla, “to cross over again the dread Charybdis,” and that I should tell Dionysius that it was impossible for me to remain now that Dion’s reputation had been tarred in this way. He, however, tried to reassure me, and he begged me to stay, thinking that it would not be good for him to have me hurrying to deliver such news myself; and when he did not convince me he said that he would provide [346a] transportation for me himself.

In fact, my intention was to board a dispatch vessel for the journey. I was furious and believed I needed to do whatever it took should I be impeded, since I was quite obviously doing nothing wrong but was instead being wronged myself. Dionysius, however, when he saw that I was not moved to remain, devised a plot to get me to stay through the sailing season, which went something like this.

He came to me on the following day and presented me with a specious argument: “Dion and his affairs,” he said, “must be eliminated [346b] as a regular source of tension between the two of us. So on your behalf,” he said, “I will do the following for Dion. I expect him to take his belongings and go live in the Peloponnese, not as an exile but under the pretense that he can travel here any time that he and I and you, his friends, approve of it together. But this depends on him not plotting against me, and on you and your companions and Dion’s relations here guaranteeing that pledge, while he should give you his assurance. Whatever possessions he takes [346c] shall remain in the Peloponnese and in Athens in the hands of whomever you think fit, and Dion can use the income from these, but he shall not be able to take charge of them without you. For I do not particularly trust him to be fair to me if he has full access to his funds – and these will not be paltry – while I do trust you and your companions. Think about it and see if these terms satisfy you, remain under them for this year, and come spring [346d] take his money and leave. I am certain that Dion will be most grateful to you for taking care of these things on his behalf.”

When I heard these words I was in fact quite annoyed, but all the same I said that I would consider the matter until the next day and then tell him what I thought. That was how we left it then. Afterwards of course, when I was considering the matter on my own, I was deeply troubled. The first line of thought that came to me was [346e] the following: “come on, if Dionysius has no intention of doing what he says, and if I leave and he himself sends specious reports to Dion (and directs many others here to do so as well) about the things he just said to me, and how he was willing while I was unwilling to do what he was urging me to do, and that instead I totally neglected his interests, and if on top of all this he no longer wishes to allow me to leave and does not send the order [347a] to any of the captains, well, he will easily demonstrate to everyone that he does not wish for me to set sail, and then will anyone want to bring me on as a passenger when I set out from Dionysius’s house?” (Indeed, on top of all my other problems I was staying in the orchard next to his residence, from which not even the door keeper would have been inclined to let me leave without some order sent to him by Dionysius.) “On the other hand, if I remain for the year I will be able to send a message to Dion about the situation in which I find myself and how I’m doing. And if Dionysius does any of the things he’s promising, my [347b] actions will not end up being entirely ridiculous, as Dion’s property is probably worth no less than a hundred talents, if it’s estimated properly. Conversely, if it turns out that these faint signs are exactly what they seem, well, I don’t know what I’ll do with myself, but all the same it is perhaps necessary to suffer for a year longer and try to expose Dionysius’s plot.”

These were my thoughts, and on the next day I said to Dionysius, “I have decided [347c] to stay. But of course I insist,” I said, “that you not think of me as Dion’s guardian, but that you and I send him a letter in which we specify the terms we have just agreed upon, and that you ask him whether these satisfy him. If they don’t, and he desires or insists upon something else, he should let us know as soon as possible, but you must at no point come up with any new sanctions against him.” This is what I said, and this is what we agreed upon, just about exactly as I have stated it.

After this the ships set sail and it was no longer possible for me to depart. Only then did Dionysius [347d] remember to mention to me that Dion was entitled to only half his estate, and his son the other half. Moreover, he said that he was going to sell the estate, and that when this was done he would give me one half to bring to Dion and leave the other half here for his son, on the grounds that it would be fairest this way. I was shocked by what he said, and though I thought it would be totally ridiculous for me to keep arguing, I said we ought to wait for a letter from Dion and then write back to him with these updates. Right after this, however, Dionysius went ahead [347e] and sold Dion's entire estate most brazenly, wherever, however, and to whomever he wished, and he said absolutely nothing about all this to me. Likewise, I certainly did not bring up Dion's affairs with him anymore, for I thought there was nothing more I could do.

Up till now I had been providing assistance to philosophy and to my friends in this manner. Afterwards, however, we lived, Dionysius [348a] and I, with myself gazing outwards like a bird longing to take flight, and with him scheming up some way to scare me off without returning anything of Dion's. Nevertheless, to all of Sicily we appeared to be friends.

At this point, and in contrast to his father's practice, Dionysius attempted to reduce the wages of his more seasoned mercenaries. The soldiers became angry and convened en masse and said that they would not back down. Dionysius then tried [348b] to break them by closing the gates to the acropolis, after which they immediately came up to the city walls and burst into some sort of warlike, barbarian paean. Dionysius then grew very afraid and conceded to all the demands, and then some, of the peltasts that had convened.

Word then spread quite quickly that Heracleides was responsible for all this. Heracleides heard this and made himself scarce, and Dionysius [348c] set about trying to catch him, and when he was unable to do so, he summoned Theodotes to the orchard. I happened to be walking around the orchard at that moment, and while I did not listen to the whole conversation and do not know everything else that was said, I remember well what Theodotes said to Dionysius in front of me: "Plato," he said, "I am trying to nudge Dionysius towards this course of action: if I am able to bring Heracleides back here to discuss the accusations that have been made against him, and if it is resolved that he should not reside in Sicily, then I think that he should take his wife and son and [348d] sail away to the Peloponnese and live there without causing Dionysius any harm, while reaping the benefits of his assets. I summoned him earlier and I will summon him again now, and perhaps he will accept one invitation or the other. But I ask and insist that Dionysius see to it that, if anyone should stumble upon Heracleides, either here or in the countryside, he will face [348e] no further consequence beyond being banished from the country, until Dionysius should decide otherwise. "Do you agree to this?" he asked Dionysius. "I agree," he said, "that even if he is spotted at your house he shall not meet with any consequences aside from those you have just mentioned."

The following afternoon Eurybius and Theodotes both came to me with the utmost urgency, tremendously worked up, and Theodotes began speaking: "Plato," he asked, "were you there yesterday for the agreements that Dionysius made with you and me about Heracleides?" "Of course," I said. "Well now," said Theodotes, "peltasts are running around trying to catch Heracleides, and I'm afraid he might be somewhere around here! [349a] You absolutely must come with us to Dionysius!" We set out and came upon him, and while those other two stood by shedding tears in silence, I said: "these men are afraid that somehow, contrary to the agreement that we made yesterday, you are devising a new punishment for Heracleides. For it seems that he has been spotted returning to these parts."

When Dionysius heard this his temper flared and his face turned all sorts of colors, as happens when one gets angry. Theodotes then [349b] fell before him, took his hand, and began to weep and beg him to do nothing of the sort, but I drew him away and tried to reassure him: "don't worry, Theodotes," I said, "Dionysius would never dare to do anything contrary to the agreement we made yesterday." Then Dionysius, looking at me most tyrannically, said: "with you I never made any agreement either small or large." "By the gods you did," I said, "namely not to do precisely what this man is begging you not to!" And having said this, I turned around and left.

After [349c] this, Dionysius continued to try and hunt down Heracleides, while Theodotes was sending messengers to him urging him to flee. Dionysius then sent out Tisias and his peltasts with orders to pursue Heracleides, but Heracleides, as the story goes, escaped and beat them to the Carthaginians' territory by just a few hours. After this, Dionysius's old plot not to return any of Dion's property seems to have provided him plausible grounds for a feud with me, and at first he sent me away from the acropolis, proffering [349d] as an excuse that the women in the orchard in which I was living needed to perform some sort of ten-day-long sacrifice; so he ordered me to stay with Archedemus during this time. While I was there, Theodotes sent for me and made it clear that he was greatly displeased about what had happened and that he blamed Dionysius. And when Dionysius heard that I had gone to Theodotes, he made of this [349e] yet another pretext for a dispute with me, one related to the previous one, and he sent someone to ask me if I had really gone to meet Theodotes when he had sent for me. "Certainly," I said, to which the other responded: "well then, he ordered me to tell you that you are behaving quite badly by always holding Dion and Dion's friends in higher regard than him." This was the conversation, and he never invited me back to his residence again, since it was by now clear that I was a friend of Theodotes and Heracleides, and an enemy to him, and he believed that I was not pleased that Dion's assets had been definitively liquidated.

[350a] After all this I was living outside the acropolis among the mercenaries. Some men came to me, including some attendants who were from Athens – my fellow citizens – and they reported that I was being disparaged among the peltasts and that certain individuals were threatening to kill me if they ever got their hands on me. So I hatched the following plan to save myself: I sent word to Archytas and my other friends in Tarentum, explaining the situation I was in. They in turn fashioned some pretext for an embassy from their city and sent [350b] Lamiscus, one of their own, on a thirty-oared ship. When he arrived, he pleaded with Dionysius on my behalf, saying that I wished to leave and that he should not refuse. Dionysius agreed, and he sent me on my way after giving me supplies for the journey. About Dion's assets, however, I never asked, nor did anyone hand them over.

When I reached the Peloponnese at Olympia, I found Dion watching the games, and I reported what had happened. Calling Zeus as his witness, he immediately demanded that my friends [350c] and companions and I get ready to exact retribution from Dionysius, us because he had cheated his guests (this is what he said, and he believed it), and himself on account of his unjust banishment and exile.

When I heard this, I encouraged him to call on my friends, if they were willing. "As for me, however," I said that, "you, along with some others, coerced me into sharing my meals, a roof, and religious rites with Dionysius, who probably thought that I was plotting against him and his tyranny with you, as many people accused me of doing, and despite that he was merciful [350d] and did not kill me. Moreover, I am no longer of the age to join anyone in waging war, and I remain connected to you both, in case you should require each other's friendship and wish to do something good. But as long as your heart is set on destruction, call on others."

So I said, full of hatred for my Sicilian wandering and misfortune. They, however, did not listen, and by rejecting my attempts to reconcile them they are themselves to blame for their current problems, which never would have happened, as far one can tell with human affairs, if Dionysius [350e] had returned Dion's assets and simply come to terms with him. Indeed, between my desire and my capacity, I would have easily restrained Dion. But as it is, by pitting themselves against each other they have ruined everything.

[351a] And yet, with regard to his own power and with regard to his friends and city, Dion had the very same aspirations that I would say are necessary for me or for any other person who might have the reasonable goal of holding power and political office while conferring the greatest of benefits in the most important places. Conversely, no one enriches himself, his friends, and his city by plotting and putting together conspiracies, not if he himself is poor and unable to control himself, if in his cowardice he yields to his pleasures, [351b] or if he kills those who own property, calling them enemies, plundering their assets, and egging on his accomplices and companions to do the same so that no one may take issue with him by claiming to be poor. The same thing goes for anyone who is honored by the city by benefitting it in this way, by distributing to the many, by popular decree, the possessions of the few, or anyone who sits at the head of a great city that rules over many lesser ones and unfairly distributes the possessions [351c] of those smaller ones to his own city. As such, neither Dion nor anyone else will ever willingly strive for a power that would be a plague unto himself and his people for all eternity, but rather for the purpose of making a government and a body of laws that are the best and most just, created through the fewest possible exiles and executions.

To be sure, Dion was doing just that, preferring to endure unholy acts rather than commit them, though still wary of suffering them, and all the same he was tripped up just as he came to the very point of overcoming his [351d] enemies; yet what he suffered was not at all incredible. Indeed, a conscientious, wise, and prudent man who is surrounded by deviants can never completely deceive his soul about such people, but it should come as no surprise if he suffers the same fate as that good helmsman who would certainly not be ignorant of an oncoming storm, but who might be caught off guard by its extraordinary and unexpected magnitude, and swept away by its violence. Dion too was brought down in this way. For he was not ignorant of the fact that the men who brought him down were very wicked indeed, but he did not realize [351e] the depths of their ignorance and general depravity and greed, for which he lies defeated, girding Sicily with boundless grief.

[352a] After everything I have just told you, my advice to you has essentially been given, and should suffice. Because of the absurd and unreasonable nature of the reports, it seemed necessary for me to repeat the reasons that I came to Sicily a second time. And if anyone thinks that what I have said just now is somewhat reasonable and provides an adequate explanation of what happened, then I have spoken enough, and with due measure.